

ments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep and oxen, and men servants, and maid servants? The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow."—*II. Kings V., 20-27.*

It is sometimes the privilege of bad men to have good servants. Potiphar had a Joseph. Ahab had an Obadiah. Nebuchadnezzar a Daniel. On the other hand it is not unfrequently the affliction of good men to suffer from bad servants. Elisha had a Gehazi. The narrative under review teaches, amongst others, the following lessons:

I. *Without the blessing of the Holy Spirit, the most favourable circumstances are utterly useless to secure true piety.* Seldom has one been placed in a more favourable position for the cultivation of pious affections than Gehazi. He was the servant of Elisha, the man of God. He dwelt with him under the same roof. He was his confidential travelling companion. He was a constant hearer of his pious discourse, and a witness of his pious example. And yet, as far as the evidence goes, he remained unpardoned, unsanctified, and unsaved. So that one may receive the best instructions—be a witness of the best example—go out and come in under the shadow of the purest piety, and yet "live without God," and die "without hope." One may be a servant of Elisha and develop into a Gehazi. One may hear the gracious words of the Redeemer himself and develop into a Judas. Let all, then, realize the need of God's special grace, and the agency of the Holy Spirit, without which the most favourable opportunities, and the most powerful means of grace, will but deepen their darkness, harden their hearts, and sink them into a more profound and hopeless ungodliness.

II. *We are taught the difficulty of discerning human character, and how cautious we should be in our judgment of others.* Elisha was a man of unusual sagacity, and yet, although Gehazi lived in the same house with him, and was admitted to a very close familiarity as his constant travelling companion, he did not rightly discern his true character. He treated him in every respect as a true man and faithful servant. How difficult it is to know our most intimate acquaintances, and how cautious we should be in our judgment of character and motives. The apostle Paul has set before us a beautiful example of such caution. When in one of his epistles he characterizes Epaphras as "a faithful brother unto you," he cautiously adds: "as I suppose." Although the disciples went out and in with Judas for a length of time, it does not seem that any of them suspected him of perfidy. When the Redeemer at the last supper intimated that one of them would betray him, there was no voice to respond: Lord is it Judas? There was not one of them that knew him well enough to suspect him.

And how forcibly we are reminded that we should not condemn one or cast him off on mere suspicion. It could scarcely be that such a man as Elisha could live in confidential relations, for a length of time, with such a person as Gehazi without detecting some little evidence of sordidness and duplicity—some little thing that would excite suspicion. Yet he would not act upon that suspicion. He would not dismiss him from his service on account of it. He would bide his time. He would wait for the developments of Providence, assured that if his servant was a bad man, God in due time would drag him into light, and his wickedness